

# STOREFRONT ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

2014-2015



ARLINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Department of Planning & Community Development



# ARLINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS

## STOREFRONT ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (SEP)

### Overview

The Town of Arlington has established a Storefront Enhancement Program (SEP) through the Town's Planning & Community Development Department to provide grants and technical assistance to commercial property owners or local businesses seeking to renovate or restore exterior signage, lighting or storefront façades in buildings they own or rent. The SEP aims to improve the physical condition of commercial properties to ultimately improve the appearance of Arlington's business districts. Preference will be shown to projects that restore original architectural details and preserve or highlight historic character.

In Fiscal 2015, the Storefront Enhancement Program will provide grants up to \$10,000 for well-designed improvements that enhance the important features of a storefront into a more attractive image. Eligible renovations include, but are not limited to, the restoration of historic architectural details, installation of better windows, doors and building materials, and improvements to signs, awnings, and lighting. The SEP currently has \$25,000 in federal funds available for grants to eligible projects. Given this level of funding the Department of Planning & Community Development cannot guarantee that SEP applications will be awarded assistance. Funding for the program may increase in future years.

The Department of Planning & Community Development is accepting applications from interested businesses or commercial property owners, which will be reviewed to ensure that proposed work complies with SEP Design Guidelines and federal regulations. Program eligibility cannot be guaranteed. Low interest financing for exterior renovations is also available to SEP applicants from select local lenders.

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### SEP Program Outline

The SEP offers three grants for renovating commercial properties in Arlington. All grants are structured as rebates that reimburse applicants after renovation work is complete and contractors/suppliers have been paid. In all cases, applicants must provide at least 50% of project costs from private funds.

**Small Grant:** Rebate up to \$1,950 for small renovation projects or signage improvements. Assistance covers up to 50% of project cost.

**Medium Grant:** Rebate up to \$5,000 for architectural fees related to medium or large renovation projects. Assistance covers up to 50% of project design costs.

**Large Grant:** Rebates up to \$10,000 for construction costs of medium or large renovation projects. Assistance covers up to 50% of project construction costs. Compliance with federal Davis-Bacon requirements, including payment of prevailing wage rates and submission of certified payroll forms is required.

Applicants may receive one grant per property, except for signage / awning improvements, where up to four (4) Small Grants can be awarded to an applicant property, at the discretion of the Department of Planning & Community Development.

### Program Eligibility

Business owners who lease local commercial space and owners of commercial buildings in Arlington may apply for SEP grants. Applicants who are tenants must obtain and provide proof of approval from their landlords. SEP applications must meet federal eligibility requirements to receive grant funds by either:

- A) Being located in CDBG-eligible areas, where a majority of residents have low or moderate-incomes or;
- B) Being located in properties meeting federal standards for "Spot Blight".

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### SEP Design Guidelines

All renovations and improvements proposed by SEP applicants must abide by local SEP Design Guidelines.

- 1) Enhance, preserve or restore original / existing architectural details on building exteriors. *NOTE - SEP funds will NOT pay for removal, camouflage or coverage of historically valuable features on applicant commercial properties.*
- 2) Use similar exterior materials to existing ones to preserve, restore, or enhance historical features. Replacement materials should match originals as closely as possible.
- 3) Maintain a strong exterior along a building's primary street edge. Match exterior heights with neighboring buildings to preserve continuity (in conformance with zoning).
- 4) Highlight building entrances, preferably by recessing them into the exterior.
- 5) Preserve or match typical window bay dimensions evident in neighboring structures, especially in cases of substantial redevelopment. Clearly define these features through material patterns or other design features.
- 6) Maintain a cohesive storefront appearance by aligning window heights and unifying window sizes.
- 7) Use white lighting, as appropriate, to showcase a building's architectural features.
- 8) Maintain transparency in storefront windows. Blocking windows is discouraged.
- 9) Ensure that window signs comply with Arlington's Zoning Bylaw. Façade design, lighting and signs must all meet Arlington's zoning bylaws and all applicable safety, building, and accessibility codes.

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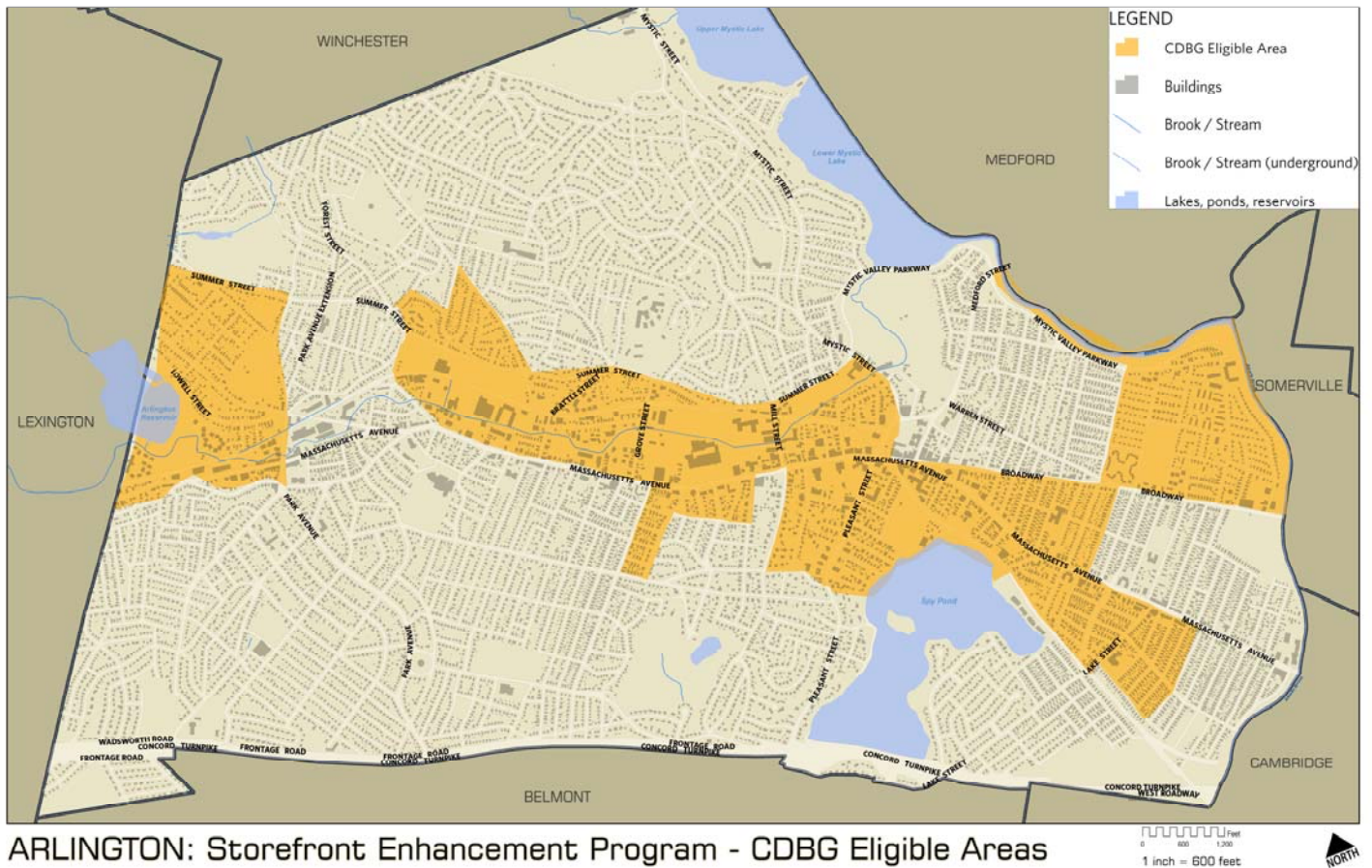
### SEP Application & Rebate Process

1. Local merchant or commercial property owner submits an SEP Application to Planning & Community Development Department. *(Applicants who are tenants provides proof of property owner's approval of SEP application).*
2. Planning & Community Development reviews application for compliance with federal eligibility requirements and SEP design guidelines.
3. Planning & Community Development sends Applicant a Grant Award letter if application is approved. Applicant may proceed with design, procurement, or permitting approved renovation work, as required.
4. Applicant obtains at least three (3) written construction quotes for renovation work described in the SEP Application. For Design Grants, provide three (3) written quotes for architectural services.
5. Applicant submits written cost estimates for contractors and designers to Planning & Community Development for approval. If the Applicant prefers to hire a firm that is more expensive than the lowest responsible estimate, the Applicant pays the difference between the two estimates.
6. Planning & Community Development sends three (3) copies of SEP Grant Agreement to Applicant, who signs all copies and returns them to the department.
7. After a SEP Grant Agreement is executed, Applicant proceeds with design and/or permitting until a Sign or Building Permit for SEP-funded work is awarded.
8. Applicant submits a copy of the Sign/Building Permit referenced in Step 7 to Planning & Community Development, which issues a **Notice to Proceed** to the Applicant.
9. Renovation/construction proceeds until substantial (95%) completion. Applicant informs Planning & Community Development, which inspects work for compliance with conditions of the SEP Grant Agreement.
10. After Planning & Community Development approves work, Applicant submits documentation that all contractors have been paid (generally copies of canceled checks).
11. Once documentation confirmed, Planning Department reimburses merchant rebate amount in SEP Grant Agreement with federal CDBG funds.



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ARLINGTON: Storefront Enhancement Program - CDBG Eligible Areas

Commercial properties in Arlington qualify for federal CDBG funding from the SEP in two ways:

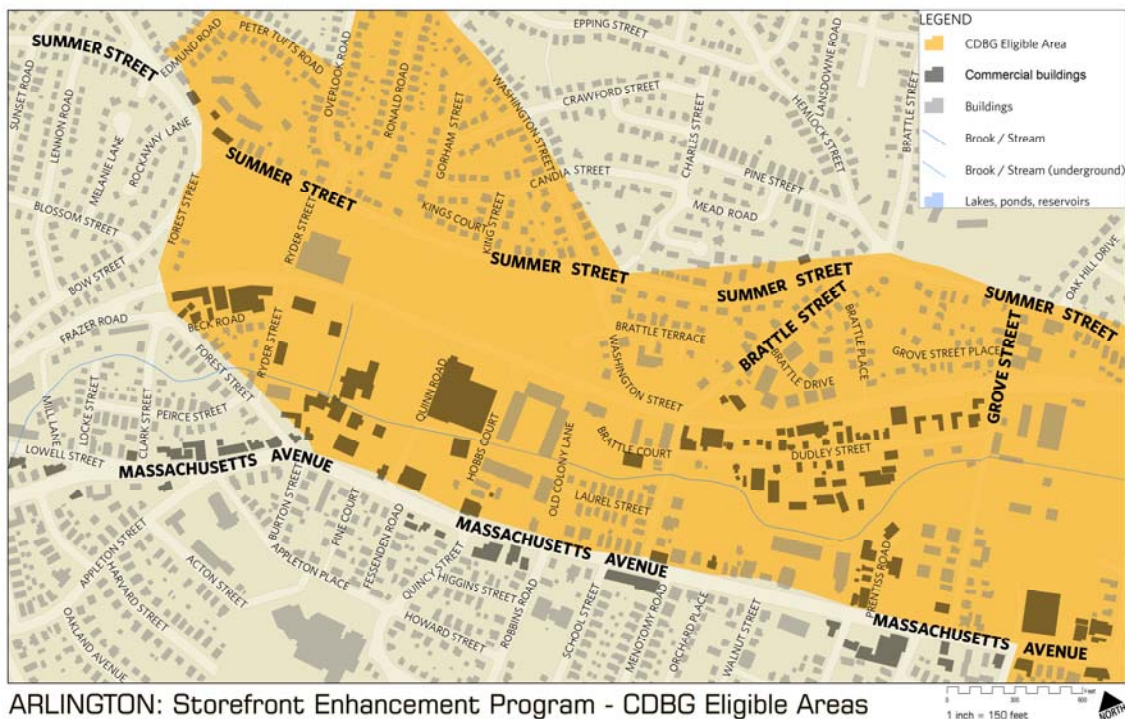
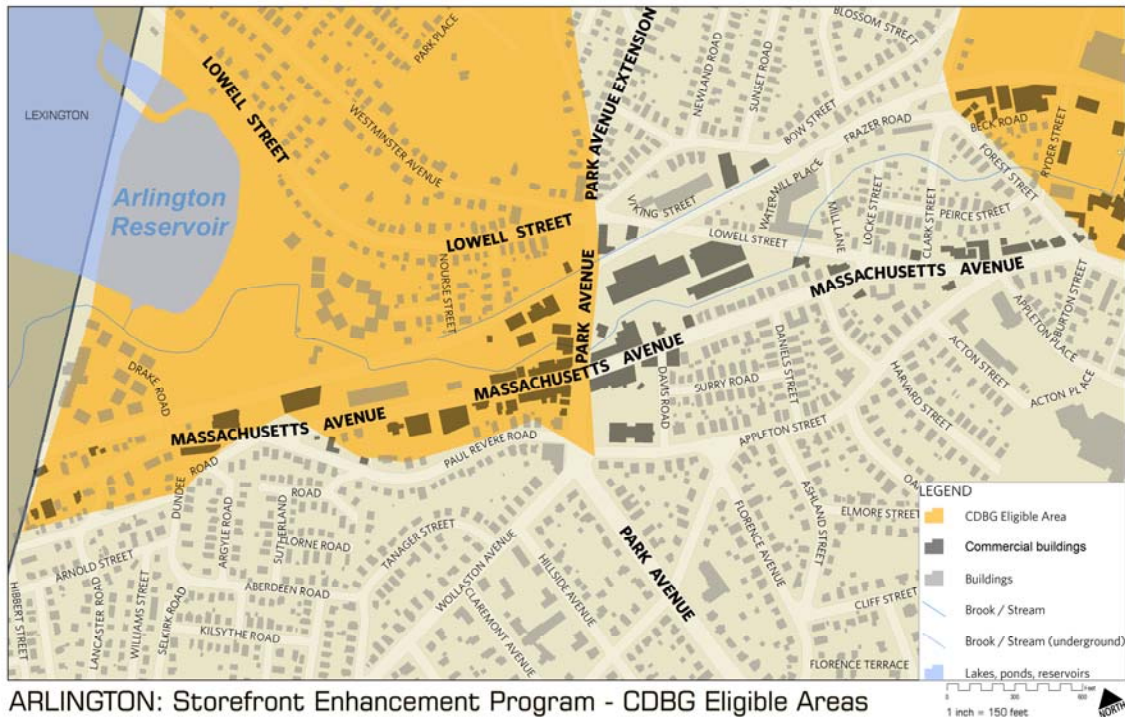
- I. Location in a CDBG-eligible area where most residents have low or moderate incomes (shown in yellow on the map at left). *Note: businesses in commercial properties located in "Yellow" CDBG-eligible areas must primarily serve local residents in order to qualify for SEP grants.*
- II. Having a deteriorated condition that meets the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development's (HUD) standards for Spot Blight. Renovation work assisted by SEP funds must cure conditions contributing to Blight in affected property.

Please consult the Department of Planning & Community Development before filing an SEP application to discuss the potential eligibility of a commercial property for SEP funding.



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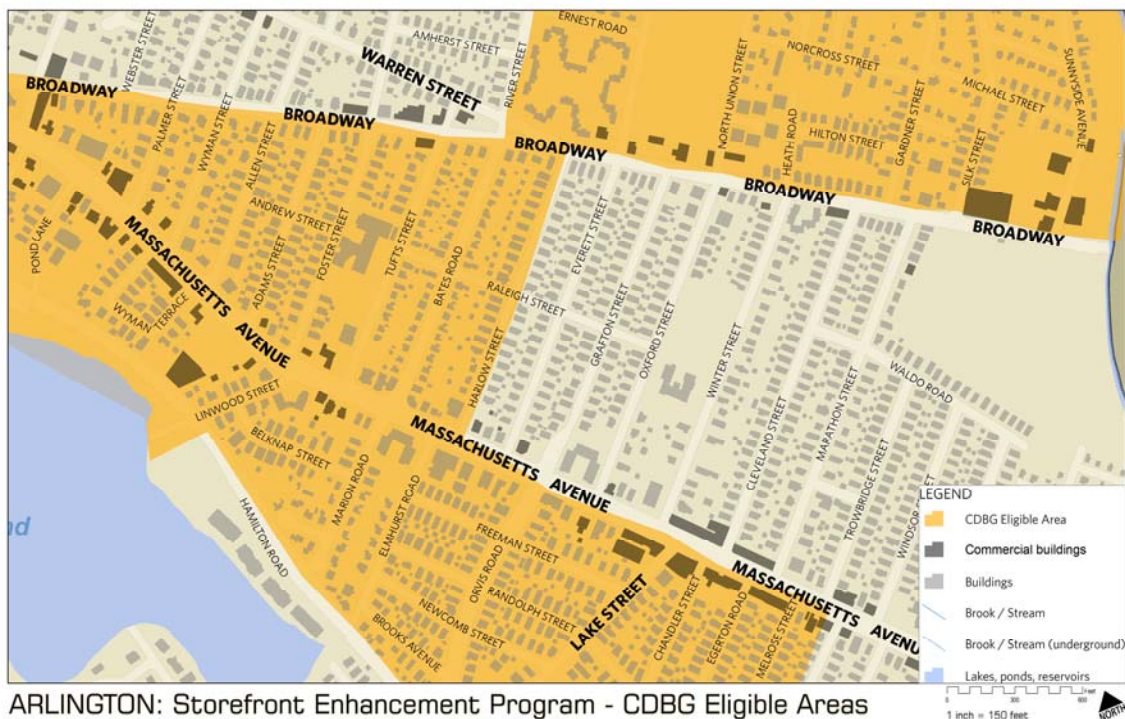
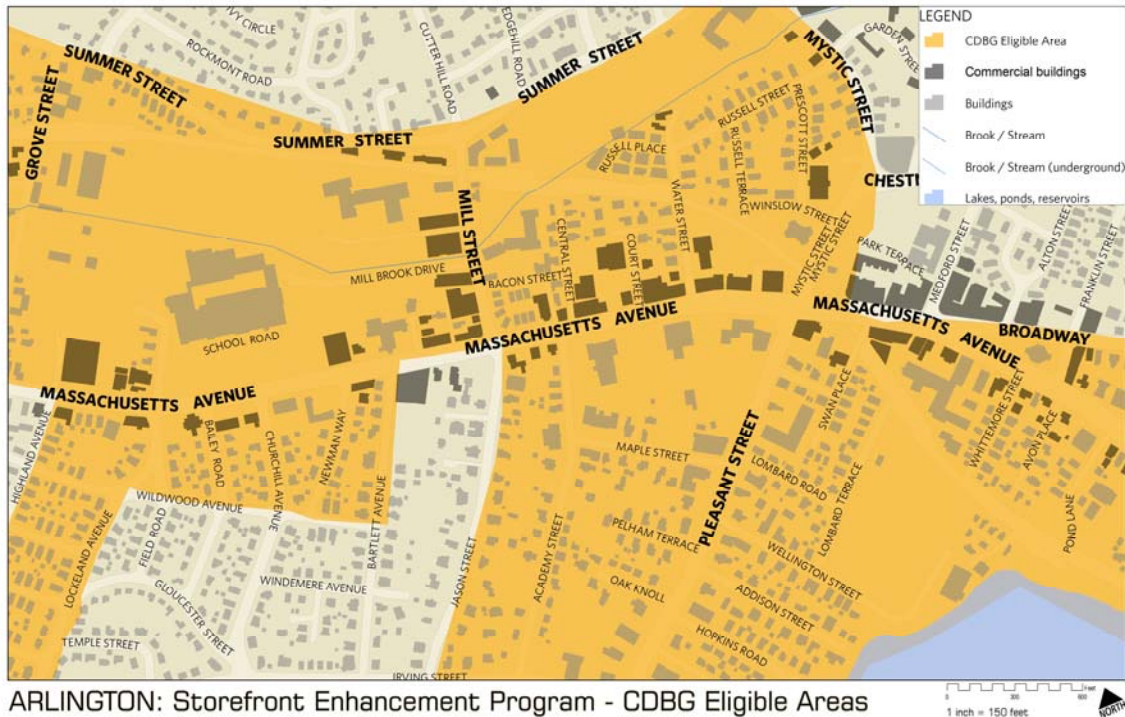
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### Traditional Storefront Elements

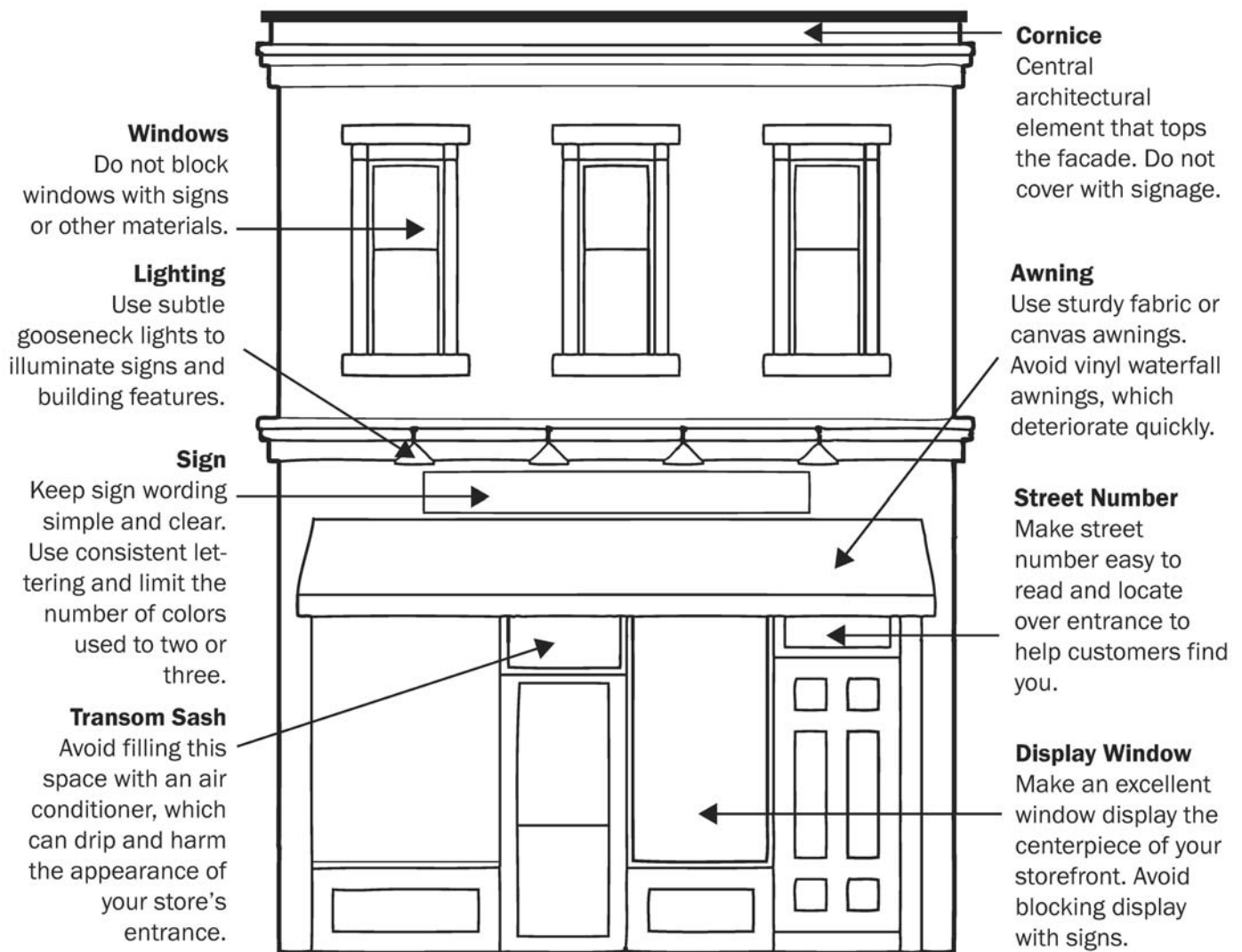


Source: Arlington Department of Planning & Community Development

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## STOREFRONT ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (SEP)

### Components of Good Storefront Design



Source: Oakislandcontractor.com



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### Examples of Good Storefront Restoration

Associates Block, Arlington Center





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### Examples of Good Storefront Restoration

#### Arlington Heights





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### Examples of Good Storefront Restoration

Capitol Theatre Block, Capitol Square



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### Commercial Renovation Contacts, Arlington, MA:

#### [Department of Planning & Community Development \(Town Hall, 730 Mass. Avenue\)](#)

**Ted Fields**      **781.316.3095**      **Economic Development Planner**      (SEP Administrator)

Joey Glushko      781.316.3093      Planner (sign review)

#### [Inspectional Services Department](#)      [\(51 Grove Street\)](#)

Michael Byrne      781.316.3090      Inspectional Services Director (building, zoning & sign permits)

#### [Selectmen's Office](#)      [\(Town Hall, 730 Massachusetts Avenue\)](#)

Marie Krepelka      781.316.3022      Board Administrator (licenses)

Mary Ann Sullivan 781.316.3024      Clerk (awning permits)





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